LAKE COUNTY
FLORIDA
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Quarterly Newsletter

WINTER 2009 • VOLUME 1

COUNTY MESSAGE:

From the County Manager's Desk

Welcome to the first edition of the Lake County Quarterly Newsletter.

The purpose of this newsletter is to inform citizens about the inner workings of Lake County Government. With 13 offices and departments, 30 divisions and 800 employees, it is important that our stakeholders understand the different services Lake County Government provides to the community.

While we will take this opportunity to issue safety tips, promote upcoming events and mention the County's recent accomplishments, the main goal of the newsletter is to educate residents about the County's operations in hopes they will understand the importance of the services provided and use them fully.

The services the Lake County Board of County Commissioners provide to the community, such as Fire Rescue, Libraries and Road Maintenance, are an integral part to our community's quality of life. Lake County's enhanced quality of life, pristine natural resources and small-town charm are the cornerstones of what makes this a unique and attractive community.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter and if there are services Lake County provides that you would like to learn more about in future editions of the Lake County Newsletter, please contact my office at (352) 343-9888.

Cindy Hall

Cindy Hall, *County Manager*

FEATURE FUNCTION:

Public Lands Section is Naturally Different

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Public Lands Management Section was created in September 2005 to guide the acquisition and management of public lands. The creation of the Section is a direct result of Lake County voters approving a public-land referendum on Nov. 2, 2004. The referendum approved a one-third millage for the County to issue $36 million in bonds for the acquisition and improvement of land to protect drinking water, improve water quality of rivers and lakes, protect open space and provide recreation areas.

After about three years of acquiring property, the Public Lands Management's two employees — David Hansen and Lauren Brothers — are trading in their dress shoes for work boots.

After acquiring nearly 1,900 acres, the Public Lands Section is developing plans to rehabilitate and protect these properties. The Section

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INSIDE SCOOP:

A Wave of Interest in Mobile Irrigation Lab

Started two years ago, the Lake County Mobile Irrigation Lab helps the agricultural community by visiting groves, nurseries and greenhouses to offer a free, unbiased and confidential evaluation of irrigation systems.

Based on the recommendations from the professional lab team, agricultural operations have the opportunity to conserve water. Since the program began, the Lake County Mobile Irrigation Lab has evaluated more than 1,900 acres and identified potential savings of nearly 200 million gallons of water per year.

The lab team of Bobby Brown and James Joiner evaluates agricultural irrigation operations by checking the piping, irrigation heads, pumps and all other components of the system. Tests and measurements at various sampling points help them to determine if any problems exist.

"Farmers are busy trying to sell their products," Brown said. "Agricultural owners don't necessarily have the time, tools or knowhow to check the efficiency of the irrigation system. As a free service the lab is a helpful tool."

While the goal of the lab is to help water conservation efforts, an extra benefit for the program's participants is the savings in fuel. The majority of well pumps in local groves run on diesel. Most of the pumps run six to eight gallons an hour while some V-8 units burn as much as 14 gallons an hour.

"If you can cut a couple hours off their daily run time, that's saving a lot of diesel," Joiner said.

The field evaluation process typically takes the lab team less than three hours to complete. After collecting the needed data, the team heads to its offices in Eustis to analyze the numbers and compile a written report. The report is supplied to the owner, which includes recommendations to increase irrigation system efficiency. After recommended improvements are completed, the lab is available for re-evaluations.

The Mobile Irrigation Lab is funded by a grant from three partners: the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and St. Johns River Water Management District. The Lake County Board of County Commissioners contributes to the program as lab staff are County employees and they receive active support from other County personnel. The Lake Soil & Water Conservation District helped apply for the grants to get the Mobile Irrigation Lab started.

"The people in the agricultural community have been wonderfully cooperative and have embraced this service," said Nadine Foley, Board Supervisor for the Lake Soil & Water Conservation District. "Since we are non-regulatory, I think people are more comfortable working with our team. They know our team is there just to help them."

Owners of agricultural operations in Lake County can schedule an appointment or ask for more information about the Mobile Irrigation Lab by calling (352) 343-2481 ext. 6.

MAKING CENTS:

The cost of outfitting a fire engine

At $300,000, the cost of purchasing a new fire engine is a tall order for any budget. While many people understand fire engines don't come cheap, a lesser known fact is the price of equipping this public-safety apparatus is equally staggering.

F A S T F A C T S

Lake County currently owns 15 frontline fire engines and five reserve engines, in addition to three squads and one tower truck. With an average of 25,000 annual miles placed on each of the 15 fire engines, they are routinely replaced after only 10 years of service.

All of Lake County's 15 frontline engines are basically set up the same. The total cost of equipment on a basic-support fire engine is close to $100,000 while and advanced-life support engine is about $30,000 more, said Jack Fillman, Assistant Chief-Administration for the Lake County Fire Rescue Division.

The hefty sticker price of an engine's on-board equipment begins in the cab, which includes four or five air packs, a thermal imaging camera, radios, flashlights and personal gear. Each firefighter is assigned $3,000 of personal gear, which includes pants, coat, helmet and additional brushfire gear. While public-safety radios are shared between shifts, the small, handheld radios are far from the cheapest piece of equipment in the engine's cab. At nearly $5,000 a radio, firefighters guard the radios and often wear them attached to a strap over their shoulder.

"Every morning I start my shift, one of the first things I check for is to make sure we have all three radios from the previous shift," said Lt. Troy Braley.

The engineer's compartment, which is the first one on the driver's side of the engine, is where couplings, gallons of foam and additional hoses and nozzles, such as the fog and straight nozzles, are stored. At nearly $600 a pop, nozzles are an expensive necessity for fighting fires. The next compartment includes additional nozzles for spraying foam and rapid attack, and hoses. The final compartment of driver side of the engine includes extinguishers, positive-pressure fan, circular saw to cut through concrete or metal and the all-important granular absorbent to soak up oil leaks *(commonly referred to as kitty litter.)*

At the back of the engine, costs begin to mount quickly. On top of the engine are three supply hoses of 1,000, 400 and 200 feet and two hard, 10-foot hoses to tap static sources, as well as three ladders of varying length and long New York hooks for pulling down drywall. The extraction department at the rear includes a hydraulic power unit with three tools — cutter, ram and spreader *(also known as the jaws of life)*. At $45,000, the extraction equipment is expensive but necessary to free trapped passengers in a wrecked vehicle.

The last compartment on the passenger's side of the engine is the power compartment. It houses a generator that is used to power scene lights, Sawzall and other equipment found in previous compartments. The next compartment houses a 20-inch chainsaw and hand tools, including a closet hook, pick-head axe, bolt cutters, sledge hammer, round-tip shovel, square-top shovel, broom, pry bar, and three additional New York hooks.

The final compartment on the engine is located directly behind the passenger side of the vehicle and is also one most frequently used. The medical compartment includes an oxygen tank, medicines, bandaging, splinting, pediatric box, trauma bag and a cardiac monitor, which is another costly but needed piece of an equipment that is found on advanced-life support engines with a price tag of $24,000.

PINPOINT POST:

Welcoming Tourists to Lake County

What: Lake County Welcome Center	**Staffed:** Four full time, 12 part time and two volunteers
Where: 20763 U.S. Highway 27, Groveland, FL 34736	**Services available:** Personal attention from customer representatives on planning your vacation in Lake County, as well as tourism-related brochures and information, free wireless Internet and orange juice
Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., daily	
Phone: (352) 429-3673	

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recently submitted its first land management plan to the Board of County Commissioners, which outlines improvements for the property, such as short trails and picnic locations.

"I think there has been a misconception of what we do," said Hansen, Public Lands Manager. "We are not going around buying this property for parks with active recreation. These lands are for preservation and conservation.

"There are a lot of citizens that were born and raised here, and I think they are excited about saving some of these properties. I also think there are quite a few citizens that are eager to get out and enjoy these properties."

Some properties don't lend themselves to even passive recreation and will be strictly for preservation. Nonetheless, after years of agricultural uses on the properties many are in desperate need of revitalization.

In the past months, Hansen and Brothers have had to spend more time working on the properties doing various activities, such as fixing fences and posting signs. However, the less time in the office and more fieldwork is not a problem for them.

"I'm looking forward to it," said Brothers, an Environmental Technician. "We're going to be getting our properties back to natural ecosystems and that's exciting."

For more information about the Public Lands Section, call (352) 343-9648 or log on to www.lakecountyfl.gov, keyword: public land.

IN THE FOLD:

Planning is a 'Chief' Operation

Position	Chief Planner, one of three
Department & Division	Department of Growth Management, Zoning Division
Employee	Anita Greiner

What services does your Division provide?

The Zoning Division provides information concerning residential and commercial properties, such as what can be constructed on a property, the required setbacks and if a property can be split. The Division issues zoning permits when someone constructs or places anything on a parcel. The Division accepts applications for and completes minor, family and agricultural lot splits, along with lot-line adjustments between parcels. The Division also accepts and processes applications for variances to the Code, which involves writing staff reports *(which gives a recommendation to the Board)*, site visits and presenting the cases to the Board of Adjustment.

What is a new service for your Division?

In 2008, the Division began processing applications for all minor site plans *(small commercial endeavors)*. The Zoning Division accepts and processes all applications for rezoning, conditional-use permits, preliminary plats, master park plans and major site plans. When the application is found sufficient, it is transferred to the Planning & Community Design Division for completion of the project.

What are the main responsibilities of your job?

To supervise and train commercial and residential planners, write staff reports for variance applications and present the cases to the Board of Adjustment, develop procedures and processes, and prepare revisions to the Land Development Regulations. I meet with citizens concerning their property or property they plan to purchase; I answer their questions and give them information about the property so they understand all of their options. I also participate in public-speaking presentations to groups interested in hearing about the Zoning Division and the services we offer.